

Evaluating Character Education Initiatives



This section is about evaluation, not research. To do good research one would need a research design. Is the research study experimental or quasi-experimental? Are you using random selection as a means of determining your control and experimental schools? Do your control schools match up well with your experimental? If not, do you have measures to statistically “match them up?” What assessment measures are you using? Are they reliable? Are they valid? Do you have statisticians on board who will be able to interpret your data? Most schools and districts are not prepared to answer these questions, which are prerequisite to a true research study.

If you are like most school personnel, you want to gather and understand data that will help you improve your efforts. Dr. Ed DeRoche in paraphrasing Daniel Stufflebeam (2000) stated, “For school personnel at a school site who want to evaluate their own work and efforts, my opinion is that evaluation is best looked at, not necessarily as a way to prove something, but to improve something.”

This is what good evaluation does. Good evaluation allows us to determine the baseline of where we are as a school—uncover our strengths and weaknesses—and then build instructional or social/ethical strategies to improve our efforts. Appendix B contains three evaluation instruments developed by Dr. Ed DeRoche and taken from his book, *Evaluating Character Development: 51 Tools for Measuring Success* (2004). You have permission to use any of these instruments within your individual schools. How might you go about using these instruments? First—decide if these instruments will enable you to obtain a greater understanding of perceived strengths and weaknesses within the social and ethical climate of the school. Please consider the following steps if you decide to use one of the assessments.

1. Determine a time when stakeholders can take the assessment in a relaxed atmosphere. For adults it may be during the first 15 minutes of a faculty meeting. If the assessment is for students, you may consider giving the assessment right after school starts. Middle or high school students could complete a student assessment during advisor/advisee or homeroom period. Students as well as adults should be encouraged to answer the questions with complete honesty. Assign one student (during class time) or adult (after school) to collect the completed assessments and place them in a large manila envelope. Privacy should be insured for all participants.
2. Take the completed assessments and begin the process of evaluating the data. This should be a fairly easy thing to do. For example, if you choose to use SES 3-1—School Outcomes, you would divide the surveys according to which group (parents, students, teachers, etc.) completed the survey. Then you would number from one to twelve and summarize the data under the headings from (5) meaning major improvement to (1) meaning no improvement. Upon completion of this you would have some solid data that would indicate the success of your efforts. In addition, you could and should compile the short answer or qualitative

aspects of the questionnaire. This can provide additional information for those seeking to gain a greater understanding of the outcomes of their character-building efforts.

3. Once you compile the data, share this with all stakeholders in the building. Note the areas in which you are strong. You must also note the areas that need improvement. Plans should be made to determine the steps needed to make concerns into strengths within the school. What might you need to do to improve the perceived lack of civility in your school? What might you need to adjust to have a greater impact? What training might you need to get more stakeholders on board? The strategies you decide to implement must be descriptive and doable. If you are in a school with many perceived areas of concern, do not try and address all of them at one time. Pick two or three areas to focus your efforts. Why just two or three areas? In reality, trying to focus on more than two or three areas of concern could result in staff burnout. We must do what is doable. Besides, this is not a horse race. If you address two or three concerns a year and turn them into assets, you will radically change your school. Far too often educators try to do too much too quick. A two- to three-year, data-driven effort will pay far more dividends than a one-year effort.
4. The next year you should use the same assessment. Why use the same assessment? Comparing apples to apples will allow you to see the areas you have improved from one year to the next. I would urge you to consider using the same assessment(s) over at least a five-year period. Notice I said assessments. One assessment might not be enough. You may want to assess the integrity of your students using an assessment that focuses on students answering questions regarding their integrity. You may want an assessment just for parents. The key is using the same assessment over a period of years so you can determine if the school's character-building efforts are having a positive impact on the stakeholders of your school or community.

Good assessments are an important tool for any school wishing to determine if its efforts are having the desired impact. The following assessments are yours to use if you believe they could enhance your efforts. However, these assessments are rather narrow in scope. There are other assessments that may provide you additional information to guide your efforts. Just remember, if you know your goals, and you know the data, then you are on the right path. Without good data you are only guessing.

Resources

Deroche, E. (2004). *Evaluating character development: 51 tools for measuring success*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.

Stufflebeam, D. (2000). The CIPP model for evaluation. In D. Stufflebeam, G. Madaus, & T. Kellaghan. *Evaluation models: Viewpoints on educational and human services evaluation*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

APPENDIX B

Evaluation Instruments

These evaluation instruments are reprinted with permission of the author. School-level staff may use these surveys within their individual schools. Evaluation instruments are taken from Dr. Edward DeRoche's *Evaluating Character Development: 51 Tools for Measuring Success* (2004), available from the Character Development Group, Inc., Greensboro, North Carolina.

SES 3-1

School Outcomes

Respondent:

- ☐ Teacher ☐ Administrator ☐ Student
☐ Support Staff ☐ Parent ☐ Central Office Administrator
☐ Community Partner ☐ Other _____

Directions: Since this school has implemented a character education program, what improvements have you seen or experienced? Use this scale:

- 5 = Major Improvement 4 = Considerable Improvement**
3 = Some Improvement 2 = Minimal Improvement
1 = No Improvement

1. The school's image and reputation	5	4	3	2	1
2. Relationships among school personnel	5	4	3	2	1
3. Relationships between teachers and students	5	4	3	2	1
4. Shared decision making	5	4	3	2	1
5. A safer environment	5	4	3	2	1
6. Fewer classroom interruptions	5	4	3	2	1
7. More parent involvement	5	4	3	2	1
8. Better school partnerships	5	4	3	2	1
9. Better relationships among the students	5	4	3	2	1
10. Greater attention to the school's core values	5	4	3	2	1
11. More civil and polite language	5	4	3	2	1
12. More support from the school's administrators	5	4	3	2	1

What has impressed you MOST about this school's character education efforts?

What still needs to be done?

What is the reputation of the school in this community?

What do you like or not like about this school?

SES 3-2

Student Outcomes

Respondent:

- ☐ Teacher
 ☐ Administrator
 ☐ Student
☐ Support Staff
 ☐ Parent
 ☐ Central Office Administrator
☐ Community Partner
 ☐ Other _____

Directions: Using the following 20 items below, please answer the question that follows. Check one space for each item.

What has happened to students since the implementation of this school's character education program?

1. Their behavior has
☐ greatly improved ☐ improved somewhat ☐ not improved.
2. The dropout rate has
☐ increased ☐ decreased ☐ stayed about the same.
3. Their attendance rate has
☐ increased ☐ decreased ☐ stayed about the same.
4. Their attitudes have
☐ improved greatly ☐ improved modestly ☐ not improved.
5. Their service/volunteering has
☐ increased ☐ decreased ☐ not changed.
6. Their use of civil language has
☐ greatly improved ☐ improved modestly ☐ not changed.
7. Their participation in the school's activities programs (sports, clubs, etc.) has
☐ increased ☐ decreased ☐ not changed.
8. Their academic achievement has
☐ greatly improved ☐ improved somewhat ☐ not changed.
9. Their motivation to do school work has
☐ greatly improved ☐ improved somewhat ☐ not changed.
10. Incidences of student physical violence have
☐ increased ☐ decreased ☐ not changed.
11. Incidences of student verbal abuse (bullying, ridiculing, blaming, angering, tormenting, etc.) have
☐ greatly decreased ☐ decreased somewhat ☐ not improved.
12. Their involvement in school affairs (rules, policies, taking leadership roles) has
☐ increased significantly ☐ increased somewhat ☐ not changed.
13. Student relationships with teachers have
☐ greatly improved ☐ improved somewhat ☐ not changed.
14. Student attentiveness in class has
☐ greatly improved ☐ improved somewhat ☐ not improved that much.
15. Students seem to be
☐ more respectful ☐ less respectful ☐ about the same.

16. The relationships among students seems to have
☐ improved dramatically ☐ improved modestly ☐ not changed.
17. Their participation in cooperative learning activities (group work, teamwork) has
☐ greatly improved ☐ improved modestly ☐ not improved.
18. Students' critical thinking skills have
☐ really improved ☐ improved somewhat ☐ not improved.
19. Their knowledge about the school's core values is
☐ impressive ☐ better ☐ minimal.
20. Their application of the school's core values is
☐ heartwarming ☐ not as good as it should be
☐ leaves much to be desired.

SES 3-3

School Climate: Attitude Scale

Measuring school climate can help us understand what was and what is, so that we can move forward to what could be.

H. Jerome Freiberg, "Measuring School Climate: Let Me Count the Ways." *Educational Leadership*

Strong, positive cultures are places with a shared sense of what is important, a shared ethos of caring and concern, and a shared commitment to helping students learn....

Ken Peterson and Terence Deal, "How Leaders Influence the Culture of Schools." *Educational Leadership*

There are many instruments available for assessing school climate or culture. The focus in this one is on a school's climate as it relates to the school's character education efforts. Many of the items are based on the findings and recommendations of James Leming's research work reported in *Character Education: Lessons from the Past, Models for the Future* (Camden, Me.: Institute for Global Ethics, 1993.)

The character education committee may administer this instrument to different stake holder groups at different times. For example, the first time the instrument is used, the committee may wish to survey only the students, and later only the parents. This will depend on the time and resources available to collate, analyze and report the information gleaned from this scale. Remember that climate is to a school what character is to an individual.

Respondent:

- ☐ Teacher ☐ Administrator ☐ Student
☐ Support Staff ☐ Parent ☐ Central Office Administrator
☐ Community Partner ☐ Other _____

Directions: After each statement, circle the number indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree.

5 = Strongly agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral
 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1. This school is a safe place to be. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2. School rules are clear and fairly applied. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3. Standards for student achievement are clear. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4. Standards for student behavior are clear. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5. There is mutual respect between teachers and students. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6. This school is free from bullying and harassment. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 7. Students respect each other in this school. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8. Core values are modeled by adults in this school. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9. Cooperative teaching and learning strategies are used in most of the classes. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 10. Students are really engaged in this school's character education efforts. |

5	4	3	2	1	11. Communication is a real problem in this school.
5	4	3	2	1	12. There are high expectations for positive student behavior.
5	4	3	2	1	13. Most classes are orderly and free of disruptions.
5	4	3	2	1	14. In this school you will find most of us using civil, positive language.
5	4	3	2	1	15. Our school's character education efforts involve parents.
5	4	3	2	1	16. This community supports the work we do to teach, learn, and practice the core values.
5	4	3	2	1	17. The cafeteria is a safe and pleasant place to eat.
5	4	3	2	1	18. There is respect for the property of others.
5	4	3	2	1	19. You won't find graffiti at this school.
5	4	3	2	1	20. Add other items.
5	4	3	2	1	<hr/>
5	4	3	2	1	<hr/>
5	4	3	2	1	<hr/>
5	4	3	2	1	<hr/>
5	4	3	2	1	<hr/>

SES 3-9

Student Integrity Questionnaire

This sample evaluation questionnaire might be used to gather additional baseline data about student integrity (honesty, cheating, etc.). Depending on the results, it may help focus some of the content/lessons in your school's character education program.

The instrument not only helps the character education evaluation committee (CEEC) gather data, it also informs the students that there is interest by teachers and administrators in such behaviors. For example, in a three-year middle school, first-year students might complete the questionnaire near the end of the year, and then again during their second and third years at the school. At a high school, the questionnaire might be given to a sampling of the freshman class and administered each year as the class progresses through the next three years.

Comparing the findings might be informative and instructive. The CEEC can add any variables they are interested in examining (e.g., gender or achievement level).

This student-integrity questionnaire was brought to my attention by Claire Patin, a character education specialist and math teacher at Francis Parker School (San Diego). It was written for the school by Deborah Bright, an English teacher at "Parker," and has been modified for the purposes of this book with permission from the author.

Directions: Please answer the following questions honestly and openly. Your answers will help us track behaviors that we hope will inform our work in this school's character education program. Place a check mark in the appropriate space following each item. Your name is not necessary.
(Note: CEEC would place demographic data request here.)

HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU...	Never	A few times	Many times
1. copied someone else's homework?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. copied off of a web site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. let someone copy your homework?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. let someone copy off you during a quiz or test?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. copied off someone during a quiz or test?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. let your parents/family member/tutor or friend do more of your homework than you knew to be appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. gotten questions or answers (e.g., between classes) to a quiz or test?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. used notes/crib sheets during a test/quiz?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. given someone questions or answers from a test or quiz?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. missed part or all of a school day because you were unprepared for a test or an assignment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**ARE YOU AWARE
OF ANY OF YOUR
FRIENDS OR
CLASSMATES
WHO...**

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 11. copy other students' homework? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 12. allow parents/family members/tutor or friends
do more of their homework than was appropriate? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 13. get answers to tests or quizzes? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 14. cheat during a test or quiz? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 15. copy from someone else's test or quiz? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 16. copy website information and use it as
their own work? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 17. missed part or all of a school day because they
were unprepared for a test or an assignment? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

**IF YOU KNEW
SOMEONE...**

18. who was cheating in any way, would you (check all that apply)
- ☐ talk to him/her about it suggesting he/she stop
 - ☐ tell a teacher
 - ☐ tell a friend
 - ☐ tell a parent
 - ☐ do nothing
 - ☐ do something but it depends on who it is
 - ☐ other options (list one) _____
19. who makes racist or bigoted remarks, would you (check all that apply)
- ☐ talk to him/her as the remarks are being said about how you feel
 - ☐ ignore it, do nothing
 - ☐ simply walk away and let the person continue
 - ☐ tell someone else how bad such remarks make you feel
 - ☐ get advice from your parents on how to handle such a situation
 - ☐ get advice from a teacher or counselor
 - ☐ ask a friend how best to handle it
 - ☐ other options (list one) _____
20. who had used drugs or alcohol, or had an eating disorder, or stole things,
or cheated, would you (check all that apply)
- ☐ talk to him/her and express you concerns
 - ☐ talk to him/her and insist that he/she seek help
 - ☐ tell his/her parents
 - ☐ ask your parents for advice
 - ☐ tell a teacher or counselor
 - ☐ do nothing because it's not your business
 - ☐ tell some friends so that together you can do something
 - ☐ other options (list one) _____

**Please indicate
whether or not you
think each of
the following
statements is true
or false by circling
T or F.**

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 21. Lying is a relative thing; it depends on the situation. | T | F |
| 22. A person who lies often enough in “insignificant situations,” may also lie in important situations. | T | F |
| 23. The ends justify the means; that is, as long as the result is what you want, it doesn’t matter how you get it. | T | T |
| 24. Cheating is a relative thing. It really depends on how big the “stakes” are (e.g., a quiz vs. a major test). | T | F |
| 25. Because of parent pressure, most students at this school go after high grades no matter what the cost. | T | F |
| 26. Because of the pressure to get into the “right” college or university, many students at this school will cheat/lie/plagiarize to get good grades. | T | F |

**Please answer
these questions.**

27. How much of a problem is cheating at this school?
- _____
- _____
- _____
28. How much of a problem is stealing at this school?
- _____
- _____
- _____
29. If there is a problem with cheating or lying in test-taking and/or doing assignments, whose fault is it?
- _____
- _____
- _____
30. What is your greatest concern about going to this school?
- _____
- _____
- _____